



Local Purchasing for School Meals

A Triple Win

The Background

Utah schools and childcare centers serve over **88 million** meals and snacks to our children each year. Cost is one of the most common barriers cited by both schools and farmers on why more Utah-grown fruits, vegetables, and meat are not included in school meals. Schools simply cannot afford to pay the prices small farmers need to charge in order to be profitable.

Eight states have developed incentive programs that encourage school nutrition programs to purchase locally produced food by rewarding them for these purchases, helping districts and producers overcome this barrier. These states have seen large increases in the amount of local food purchased and served by participating schools.

We are requesting **\$275,000*** for a one-year pilot of a Utah-grown incentive program.

Pilot Program

The pilot will be administered as a grant program by the USBE's Child Nutrition Programs, in collaboration with Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Their preliminary plan includes the following guidelines:

- Schools and childcare centers will apply to receive funding.
- Additional reimbursement will be available for unprocessed Utah-grown fruit, vegetables, eggs, and meat (including fish and poultry).
- Food must be served as part of the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, After-school Snack, At-Risk After-school Meals Programs, Seamless Summer Option, or any CACFP meals or snacks that are claimed for reimbursement.
- Schools will submit invoices showing local purchases that qualify for the additional reimbursement.
- A maximum of 20 grants will be awarded, to ensure each applicant receives enough funding to make meaningful local purchases.

A Win for Utah Farmers

- Providing financial incentives for local purchases allows schools to pay market rate for high quality local produce.
- Schools provide a large, consistent market for local farmers over 88 million meals each year.
- Children who eat local food grow up understanding the importance of agriculture and support Utah farms.

*\$245,000 will be distributed as grants; the remaining \$30,000 will be used for program administration by UDAF and USBE.

Incentivizing the purchase of local foods is a win for our farmers and food producers, our students, and our local economy.



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A Win for Utah's Children

- Serving local food in school meals promotes equity within our food system by ensuring that all children are able to enjoy Utah-grown food, not just those whose parents have time and money to purchase and prepare groceries from farmer's markets.
- Cafeteria managers in states with similar programs have reported decreased food waste and increased fruit and vegetable consumption among students.
- Additional funding allows schools to plan for consistent farm to school programming, as opposed to occasional events, increasing demand for locally produced food.
- Farm to school programs are associated with better health outcomes and increased nutritional knowledge.

A Win for Utah's Economy

Farm to school programs have a strong return on investment. \$245,000 in local food purchases can be expected to return \$422,531 to Utah's economy.**

Local reimbursement programs leverage the Federal funding schools receive to run their Child Nutrition programs. Adding a small amount of state funding can keep more of those Federal dollars in Utah.

Example: If carrots from California cost 65 cents per pound and Utah carrots are 80 cents per pound, schools would typically buy the California carrots- and the Federal money used to make that purchases goes to California farmers. A school participating in this program would be able to spend the 80 cents on Utah carrots and be reimbursed for that purchase, incentivizing them to keep their food dollars in-state.

The farm to school relationship sparks stronger bonds between schools and farmers. Schools participating in these incentive programs typically spend more than the amount that they are reimbursed, i.e. they continue to purchase local food after the grant funds are exhausted.

CHOOSE



LOCAL

For more information: www.youtube.com/watch?v=q76vVafq5Mw
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***Economic impact estimate
calculated using:
www.localfoodeconomics.com*